

ROSA CHACEL, JOSÉ ORTEGA Y GASSET,  
AND BODILY DISCOURSE

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Criticism has emphasized the role of Ortega y Gasset — for better or for worse — in shaping fiction writers of the 1920s and 1930s vanguard. Ortega's powerful position as the owner of means of publication, and the maturity, authority, and connections he possessed in a somewhat less tangible way, cast him as a paternal figure who interacted with each writer in a way analogous to the archetype of father and son. For those who believe, as I do, that the familial and economic configurations of patriarchal society at large are mirrored in the sphere of literary creation, this father-son relationship is an important determinant to be taken into consideration when analyzing literary production of the time<sup>1</sup>. As is the case repeatedly in the cycle of literary tradition and renovation, when such a dyad is formed, the younger partner is likely to rebel in some way in addition to being influenced — the conflict itself fosters the imagination. When considering Ortega and Rosa Chacel (b. 1898), the bond becomes father-daughter, and the factor of sexual difference enters the picture. It can be expected to condition the kinds of tutelage, apprenticeship, and rebellion to be carried out. Not suprisingly, markers of sexual difference show up in Chacel's early fiction, and many have to do with her handling of the female body as a trope. Thus far, Chacel's reception of Ortega's aesthetics has been characterized as passive. The

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<sup>1</sup> Clearly, I am indebted to such studies as Harold Bloom's, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford U. P., 1967) and Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale U. P., 1979), for delineating the interrelatedness of psychoanalytic, feminist, and literary theory.

following study focuses on the discourse concerning the body in Ortega and Chacel, problematizing the notion of a passive reception on Chacel's part <sup>2</sup>. At the same time, it calls attention no less than previous studies to the strong and productive relationship between the two writers.

Most of the fiction that was produced in an avant-garde vein in the 1930s in Spain has aged poorly and now seems dated, and was harshly criticized in post-war decades as dehumanized in a negative sense (i.e. forsaking social consciousness) <sup>3</sup>. As it is customary to observe, poetry was the dominant genre and constituted the major focus of literary attention. The ingenious *greguerías* of Ramón Gómez de la Serna do not necessarily combine to make a memorable novel. Francisco Ayala is congratulated for all but disowning his novice avant-garde attempts <sup>4</sup>. The lyrical novels of Gabriel Miró, Pérez de Ayala's «poematic novels», and the deformation of reality found in Ramón del Valle-Inclán's later works, while of undisputed importance, do not entirely break with tradition in the way of full-fledged avant-gardes, the sort defined in manifestos and typified by the Dada and Surrealist movements in France <sup>5</sup>. The *Noventayochentistas* leaned more toward *renovación* in their innovations than toward *ruptura*.

<sup>2</sup> Ortega's reception of Chacel's fiction cannot be termed monolithic, either. Though often encouraging, he refused to publish her novel in its entirety, accepting only the first chapter. He claimed the rest had been «lost among some other papers». She got the distinct impression he had not read it. Interview with Kathleen Glenn, «Conversación con Rosa Chacel», *Letras Peninsulares* 3.1 (1990): 14-15.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Simone Bosveuil criticizes Chacel for seeming to write for herself instead of for others in «Proust y la novela española de los años 30: Ensayo de interpretación» in vol. 2 of *La novela lírica*, ed. Darío Villanueva (Madrid: Taurus, 1983) 130-131.

<sup>4</sup> By Gerald G. Brown, for example, in *Historia de la literatura española: El siglo XX*, trans. Carlos Pujol (1974; Barcelona: Editorial Ariel, 11th ed. 1985) 231.

<sup>5</sup> It is true that some anthologists and critics — Jaime Brihuega among them (*Las vanguardias artísticas en España 1909-1936*. Madrid: Ediciones Istmo, ca. 1981) — classify some of the later *Noventayochentistas*, and even Felipe Trigo, as *vanguardistas*. However, I am inclined in writing this not to include them as bona fide vanguardists, and in so doing to render the avant-garde a subset of rather than a synonym for Spanish Modernism. Perhaps the basis of my prejudice is my very inability to conceive of an avant-garde prior to Ortega y Gasset's tutelage. Those who bristle at such a definition of the early twentieth-century Spanish avant-garde movement may prefer to believe that I am speaking of the uniqueness of Chacel's novel among the second, or younger, wave of 1920s vanguardists.

One of the few authentically avant-garde efforts that challenges and rewards the reader at once and still merits reading for reasons other than the archeological is Rosa Chacel's *Estación. Ida y vuelta* (1930). Nor has this work met with misfortune in the eyes of its author — Chacel has professed satisfaction with her brief first novel decades later, and continues to see it as the key to all her subsequent creations<sup>6</sup>, besides using its triangular conflict as the embryo of her major opus, *La sinrazón* (1960). The novel represents a unique confrontation of the Spanish woman writer and a primarily male, incipient avant-garde «tradition», for which Ortega was spokesman. As such, it can be read with delectation today, and the present study aims to facilitate this kind of reading. In addition, as all the more recent scholarship on the book declares, reading it is essential for an understanding of the Spanish avant-garde<sup>7</sup>.

*Estación. Ida y vuelta* was written in 1925-26, the final two years Chacel spent in Italy with her husband, artist Timoteo Pérez Rubio, on a pension he had received from the Roman Fine Arts Academy. The first chapter was published in 1927 in *Revista de Occidente*, and Julio Gómez de la Serna (Ramón's brother) published the work in its entirety at Editorial Ulises in 1930, when Ortega's «Nova novorum» series, which was initially to publish it, ceased to exist. Before writing it she had read Joyce, Proust, Freud, and the *Noventayochentistas*. To these she added essays that gradually made their way from Spain, authored by a man to whom she would soon refer as her *maestro* (teacher/master), José Ortega y Gasset. They would not meet until 1930, after her return to Spain, but it is evident from her very first writings

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Janet W. Pérez, *Contemporary Women Writers of Spain* (Boston: Twayne, 1988) 61-62. Nonetheless, except for this germinal function the work still stands alone, for Chacel would never write in such an avant-garde vein again.

<sup>7</sup> A view shared by Manuela Ruiz-Malo Soria, «Reencuentro con una novela de Rosa Chacel: *Estación, ida y vuelta*», *Nueva Estafeta* 17 (April 1980): 67-71; Eunice Myers, «*Estación, ida y vuelta*, Rosa Chacel's Apprenticeship Novel», *Hispanic Journal* (Spring 1983): 77-84; Shirley Mangini, «Women and Spanish Modernism: The Case of Rosa Chacel», *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 12:1-2 (1987): 17-28; Roberta Johnson, «*Estación. Ida y vuelta*: un nuevo tiempo en la novela», *Prosa hispánica de vanguardia*, ed. Fernando Burgos (Madrid: Orígenes, 1986) 201-208; Ana Rodríguez Fischer, «Tras la senda de Ortega y Gasset», *Rosa Chacel* 49-56; Pablo Gil Casado, «El experimento narrativo de Rosa Chacel», *Nuevo Hispanismo* 2 (Spring 1982): 163-171.

onward that Ortega's general philosophy and his aesthetics of a new art had a profound and personal effect on her.

Chacel herself states that her aim was to make Orteguian philosophy the plot or protagonist of her first novel<sup>8</sup>. There is in fact little that «happens» to the consciousness whose thoughts populate the text. Incidents in his life are perceived as vaguely as the passing of seasons, and come to mind in seemingly involuntary fashion, in the Proustian/Joycean manner of interior monologue. Loosely connected recollections of a first, nameless love, who at times appears fused with the narrator, succeed each other<sup>9</sup>, followed by breaks in the already tenuous thread as the narrator appears fused with the author, who usurps the narrative voice and meditates on philosophy and the very writing of novels, alternating again with the original protagonist who is now in love with someone who has a name (Julia), and who travels to France and finally returns to the first *novia* after finding out via telegram that she has had a son of his. An interesting consequence of the narrative disregard for outward occurrences is the fact that even astute studies of the novel are thus far in disagreement as to the most plot events: Gil Casado, for example, holds that the first love is identical to Julia (165).

Ana Rodríguez Fischer outlines some of the Orteguian ideas that make their presence known: the narrator's *razón vital* — the rational sense intrinsic to the individual that guides her/him along unpredictable pathways in life — is in a continual process of exposition (however, the existentialist quality that results has been effectively likened elsewhere to Unamuno<sup>10</sup>); the interiority of the protagonist never dissolves, although he is presented as absorbed in his surrounding circumstances; life (and the novel) is a pathway determined by the choice and realization of a personal destiny.

<sup>8</sup> «Ortega», *Revista de Occidente* 4:24-25 (May 1983): 79. Cited in Fischer 51.

<sup>9</sup> Mangini 19-22. I would qualify this fusion of the «I» and the «novia»: the protagonist does not, for example, «fall in love with itself» (21); there is enough representation of the first lover to indicate that she is at the same time a separate character. The narrator is able to leave her, to fall in love with another woman, yet when he returns to her he returns to himself. Most accurate would be to call these characters separated and fused at once.

<sup>10</sup> Myers 79-80. Janet Pérez's assertion that Chacel extrapolates on some tendencies in Unamuno's *novelas existenciales* is also well-taken, and hints at the rift between Ortega's theory and Chacel's praxis. «Vanguardism, Modernism, and Spanish Women Writers in the Years Between the Wars», *Siglo XX/20th Century* 6:1-2 (1988-89): 40.

Fischer also finds that formally the novel is compatible with Ortega's literary aesthetics as expressed in *Ideas sobre la novela* because of the aforementioned interior monologue, perspectivism, and narration of events taking place within the «imagined soul» rather than outside of it (54). Shirley Mangini elaborates on more ways that Ortega's description of the avant-garde became a dictum for Chacel in the writing of the novel; her avoidance of concretization of character's interpersonal relations, making his interior climate the only certainty for the reader. Furthermore, Mangini traces connections to some other currents in contemporaneous Spanish literature: the prevalence of *greguerías* much like those concocted by Gómez de la Serna (yet different in content, as we shall see), and the influence of «pure poetry» as aspired to by poets of the 1927 group in the «irrational metaphors», which often personify objects or include elements of violence.

Her study also points to an interesting question that will be developed further here: the effect of Ortega prescribing the art to come — paradoxical in that the very function of this new art was to be iconoclastic — as well as analyzing it as it was produced, coupled with Chacel's possibly problematic status as a woman writer of avant-garde, prompting Mangini to speculate that «Chacel identified so intensely with her male contemporaries that she found it necessary to employ a male character as the mouthpiece for her ideas» (23). Yet there is ample evidence in the text to suggest that the repressed figure of Woman refuses to vanish: as we shall see, the seasons and stations of *Estación. Ida y vuelta* are precisely those of a female body. In order to reflect more fully upon these and other substantial issues in the novel, it will be necessary to reconstruct as best we can some gender differences revealed in literary politics of the time.

The Spanish avant-gardes that arose in the 1920s and 1930s, including some of the poets of the Generation of 1927, were important for Ortega as cultural critic inasmuch as they represented subsets of the *arte nuevo* he had called into being. Ortega sought to describe and analyze what many of his contemporaries preferred to dismiss or eschew, and in so doing, he crossed a generational boundary to become a champion for Spain's novice *literatos*. He also installed himself as a father figure among these young artists: it was a time he viewed as a dominion of the young. He perceived himself as unfortunate for having been young

while the old held sway, and now as he entered middle age the pendulum had swung back again <sup>11</sup>. By acting as protector (and editor/publisher through *Revista de Occidente* and Espasa-Calpe) for new writers, Ortega was able to live their «mocedades» vicariously, much like Juan Ramón Jiménez, who preceded him in this role. In the case of Jiménez, the love/hate relationships that grew out of this paternal attitude are more striking and well-documented <sup>12</sup>. The fact that Ortega's relationships never became tainted with vituperation attests to his strong identification with the young people of the time; indeed, he blamed the disorder he saw in Europe of 1927 on the generation to which his own elders belonged («Juventud» 473). To Ortega's drive to prescribe a new art for the young we can also ascribe a desire to provide direction for Spain, and in turn for Europe <sup>13</sup>.

Renato Poggioli proposes deformation rather than dehumanization as a term that is at once more encompassing and more specific in describing the avant-garde that was arising under Ortega's gaze. When Poggioli criticizes Toynbee for construing the avant-garde's abandonment of Western tradition as spiritual breakdown (Ortega would have objected as well, but for other reasons), he takes into account a parameter not stated in *La deshumanización del arte*, but one of which this text was destined to become an example — the capacity of avant-garde culture to generate its own traditions:

But his [Toynbee's] greatest error is the inability to realize that the reaction of modernism to tradition is one more bond, *sui generis*, to that very tradition. Avant-garde deformation, for all that the artists who practice it define it as antitraditional and anticonventional, also becomes a tradition and a stylistic convention, as has often enough been realized... The deformation is determined by a stylistic drive, which inaugurates a new order as it denies the ancient order <sup>14</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> «Juventud», *Dinámica del tiempo* (1927), vol. 3 of *Obras completas*, 5th ed. (1947; Madrid: *Revista de Occidente*, 1962): 471. His conviction that the current generation must choose to break with the past is presented in *El tema de nuestro tiempo* (1923): 151.

<sup>12</sup> Diana Guemáñez Cruz, diss.-in-progress, Harvard University.

<sup>13</sup> A matter examined more fully by Robert Wohl in *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge and London: Harvard U.P., 1968) 178-179.

<sup>14</sup> *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Gerald Fitzgerald (Cambridge and London: Belknap, Harvard U.P., 1968) 178-179.

With the publication of *La deshumanización del arte e ideas sobre la novela* in 1925, Ortega set down two manuals on the proper means of practicing iconoclasm. The one geared mainly — though not exclusively — to the visual and aural arts supplied an epithet, *deshumanizado*, that would be used broadly later in criticizing literature influenced by the latter. This subsequent derogation of a term which Ortega had taken pains to cast in a positive light may be partially at the root of Poggioli's preference for the notion of deformation. At any rate, my aim in questioning the antitraditional nature of Ortega's impact on literature is not to undermine the iconoclasm of the avant-garde movement as a whole (the latter is better undermined, as we shall see, by exploring the role it assigns to the female body). Instead, in the case of every fledgling writer of the time influenced by Ortega one should step back and observe how this artist has found some way, consciously or not, to rebel against the master. Turning to Rosa Chacel, the additional circumstance of gender difference shows up clearly in her writing, even if she denies the importance of this factor in conversation<sup>15</sup>. Her ability to survive as a writer in the environment in question may have been contingent upon her denial of gender difference. Thus, although Chacel's stated intention in writing *Estación. Ida y vuelta* was to compose a novel in which Orteguian philosophy was the main character, and although most critics have accepted without reservation the idea that it is the «novelization» of Orteguian philosophy and of his approach to literature, I believe that examining the text itself — and particularly its intersections of textuality and physicality — reveals that the matter is not so simple.

As Fernández Cifuentes has noted, *Ideas sobre la novela* is grounded in a rigid separation of the elements of author, reader, and character/plot<sup>16</sup>. Precisely as the differentiation is established in the essay, it is deemed a necessary feature of better and contemporary novels. Ortega identifies himself, through the use of first-person singular and plural pronouns, with the role of reader only — and specifically, not a mediocre one (49). As a reader of

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Mariano Aguirre, «Rosa Chacel: La literatura femenina es una estupidez», *El País* 30 Jan. 1983 «Libros», 5.

<sup>16</sup> Luis Fernández Cifuentes, «Unamuno y Ortega: Leer una novela/Hacer una novela», *Essays on Hispanic Literature in Honor of Edmund L. King*, ed. Sylvia Molloy, Luis Fernández Cifuentes (London: Tamesis Books, 1983) 48.

Chacel I am immediately put on guard by this, since one of my first and most lasting impressions of Chacel as a novelist is that she is a very «writerly» writer <sup>17</sup>. Words, texture, lyricism (not to be confused with sentimentality) — preoccupations of writers like Gabriel Miró, who drew scathing criticism from Ortega — are important constitutive elements in her work. For as much as Ortega claims non-transcendence to be a goal of which the novelist need not be ashamed, and no matter how he prefers the novel not be put at the service of commitments other than literary ones (i.e. political or social ones), his non-identification with the author gives him little to say about writing itself. Instead, he concludes by putting the novel at the service of something equally extra-literary, namely, amateur psychological study. As the lesson of Naturalism demonstrates, in order for the novelist to function as a social scientist, scientific objectivity and isolation from the subject being studied must be assumed — even if they are eventually blurred, as Emilia Pardo Bazán's *Insolación* (1889) makes manifest. Ortega is careful to qualify his preferred subject matter as «imagined» psyches, and does not call the writer a scientist. Yet he holds that when a novel from the past seems trite to the reader of today, «it is because the reader is himself a better psychologist than the author» <sup>18</sup>.

Even on this level of reader/author/character (or plot) separateness, the novelization of Ortega by Chacel becomes suspect. The «spiritual» autobiography that precedes the story proper of *Estación* forces the reader to consider the author's self-projected image as part and parcel of the reading experience. I say «image» in appreciation of Chacel's consciousness of what is now known as the Foucauldian «author function». It is as if, knowing that whatever information the reader may have about the author's life will inevitably influence his/her perception of the book, Chacel chose to control that image, to provide the reader with exactly the author function relevant to reading the work. As several critics have observed, this autobiographical/confessional mode, while fre-

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<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Julián Marias dubbed her an *autor/auctor*, in «Azar, destino, y carácter de Rosa Chacel», the Prologue to *La sinrazón* (Andorra and Barcelona: Editorial Andorra, 1970) 13.

<sup>18</sup> *La deshumanización del arte e Ideas sobre la novela* (1925) vol. 3 of *Obras completas* 416.



quent in male authors, is almost a universal in women's writing <sup>19</sup>. Here it constitutes the most immediately visible straying of *Estación. Ida y vuelta* from Orteguian dogma. And the emergence of disparities between the novel and *Ideas sobre la novela* only begins here. The nature of most of these differences seems rooted in the active process of Chacel's assimilation, a process complicated by her own cultural definition as female.

Care must be taken in the first place in assuming that a philosophy expressed in a certain essay may be embodied in a literary work. Either or both of these terms may be bent in order to accommodate the other, to the extent that the likening winds up saying little about either of them. A case in point would be to consider the reputed *Estación/Ideas* concordance alongside a statement made recently in an insightful article: «*La Regenta* is one of the books which comes closest to fulfilling the prescriptions of Ortega y Gasset in *Ideas sobre la novela*» <sup>20</sup>. As it happens, this scholar relates the concepts of hermetism and of the provincial novel — ones which apply least to Chacel's first novel — to Clarín's masterpiece. Both works do in fact conform to the Orteguian ideal in their distinct, partial ways, yet few modern Spanish novels have as little in common as *Estación. Ida y vuelta* and *La Regenta*.

Further divergence from *Ideas sobre la novela* is found in the break of narrative thread — what little of it existed — as the narrator indulges in lengthy digressions of a philosophical and metafictional nature toward the middle and end of the novel. This rupture conforms well to the general avant-garde tendency to defy narrative intelligibility, to break with story line as an aggressive act against convention <sup>21</sup>. Chacel's implementation of it goes against the grain inasmuch as the digression causes a blurring between the narrator/protagonist of the story and the narrator/author, to whom we were introduced in the preliminary autobiography. Here Chacel bursts the bubble of hermetism irreparably: the reader

<sup>19</sup> Among them Virginia Woolf and Patricia Meyer Spacks, as noted by Mangini 24.

<sup>20</sup> Stephanie Sieburth, «Interpreting *La Regenta*: Coherence vs. Entropy», *Modern Language Notes* 102:2 (March 1987): 274.

<sup>21</sup> Susan Suleiman sets the parameters of avant-garde creation thus before examining them more closely in *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-garde* (Cambridge and London: Harvard U.P., 1990) 36.

cannot help but associate the musings on writing itself with the novelist herself. The gender-crossing implied in this between voices is more perplexing still; Chacel plays with the reader's assumptions, knowingly or not. Does the sliding back and forth from female author to male protagonist imply that there is no discernible difference between the sexes in their apprehension of themselves and of their circumstances? If this is the case, one still wonders why Chacel chose to «speak as a man» — how could this not have been conditioned by the preponderance of male writers, and Ortega's self-proclaimed Age of Masculinity? <sup>22</sup> The very crossing of boundaries calls attention to gender difference. The text supplies a partial answer to these questions:

Me avergüenza crearle [mi protagonista] muy cerca de mí, prefiero hacerle de mis viceversas... Será de esos hombres que pueden tener una permanente manifestación de «su yo». Fluctuará «mi yo» movedizo alrededor del suyo firme <sup>23</sup>.

The selection of a male voice is not without a certain irony, intentional or not, as we know that the narrator's consciousness is constantly permeated by those of his *novias* and by the author, resulting in a complex series of doppelgänger effects (Myers 81-82). In addition, the fact that a male is represented as writing this in the first place leads to an interesting *mise en abîme* that reinforces the playful gender-crossing subtext: the female author creates a male character with a firm sense of self, who in turn fantasizes about creating a male character with a firm sense of self, who in turn... One is reminded of the sisters described elsewhere as «Chinese boxes», the eldest being distinct only in that all the others are contained inside of her (56). The firm, supposedly masculine «I» is conspicuous in its absence throughout, as if to question the basic possibility of its achievement. In this sense «the Father's law», in the form of masculine mastery over the narrative, is rejected and denied, in favor of permeable character boundaries. This permeability may at first glance echo Freud's finding of permeable ego boundaries in the female psyche,

<sup>22</sup> «¿Masculino o femenino?» *Dinámica del tiempo* 471-475.

<sup>23</sup> Rosa Chacel, *Estación. Ida y vuelta* (Madrid: Ediciones Ulises, 1930) 162-3. Translated citations from this and other Spanish works that appear within the text are my own.

a finding he then uses to claim that female ego development is forever incomplete. In his novel, however, and even more so in *Memorias de Leticia Valle* (1945), the device is employed as a positive technique for illuminating feminine *vivencia*, the view from inside the female body. Stretching of character/ego boundaries has been seen in avant-garde writing by women as the literary parallel to the physical extension of self involved in motherhood (Suleiman 179). This can be discerned in the textual configurations of Chacel's novels, even if maternity as a theme remains a lateral issue to her main characters.

The shame involved in writing of a character who is «too close» is also resonant. As Suleiman asserts of the woman avant-garde writer, based on Marguerite Duras calling her own writing «doubly intolerable», writing in an antitraditional vein and being female besides makes her position twice as vulnerable (15). If we venture to presume that Chacel writes through a male mouthpiece in order to alleviate this twentieth-century version of the anxiety of female authorship<sup>24</sup>, then the *glissement* that occurs in the female author persona shows that her search for shelter behind a male protagonist is equivocal; a female voice is in fact struggling to emerge, and is playfully mocking the need for an absolute signifier, a firm «I». The reader then begins to perceive the novel as a search for a voice in a maze of discourses: confessional, literary-modernist, cinematic, and philosophical, among others<sup>25</sup>. This meshing contributes to the work's vitality.

Philosophical discourse takes center during the first digression (a clumsy label used for lack of a better one, as it is hard to pinpoint where story line ends and digression begins). The narrator

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<sup>24</sup> Even in praising her decades later, Julián Marias is careful to specify that she is a *rara avis* among women: «No hay muchos escritores; el número de escritoras es exiguo, aunque las mujeres que escriben hoy sean legión». Prologue to the second edition of *La sinrazón*, 1970, 3rd ed. (Bilbao: Ediciones Albia, 1977): 25. This sort of thinking, which cast her as an exception to the rule, or as a good writer despite being female, surely was even more prevalent at the beginning of her career and was probably instrumental in the shifting she adopted textually toward the figure of Woman, and her tendency to disown gender as an important factor in her own development — something that cannot be said of Duras.

<sup>25</sup> Not altogether germane to the present study, but worthy of discussion, is Chacel's subtextual commentary on the cinema as art form, which begins in this novel with the momentary conversion of the text into a screenplay (or with the protagonist wondering how his/her story would sound as a film) and is developed throughout her *oeuvre*.

rambles from his lack of a career to thoughts that run parallel to Ortega's well-known tenets to the effect that there are no more interesting plots to be invented, and that the individual cannot be seen as separate from his circumstances. They contain such echoes, in fact, that they distract from the hermetism of the interior monologue:

El desenlace, el encasillamiento, la clasificación de mi historia vulgar de mal estudiante que tiene un contratiempo con la vecina y recurre a la burocracia, sin terminar el doctorado. Todos verán con desprecio mi historia vulgar... Maldicen al Destino. Porque no quieren ser cuerpo de su destino. Quieren que sea algo exterior, los otros, los que están fuera, las circunstancias. Pero yo no me veo, no puedo verme, más que penetrado de mis circunstancias; me busco entre ellas, y no me encuentro (77-78).

This permeation of Orteguian doctrines, textually interrupting flow, conflicts with the idea of a voice that says: «I have my own personal norm, which I am bent upon imposing. Because that is true satisfaction, that contradiction, that resisting the current» (80). Yet the regurgitation seems oddly necessary, something that the novelist must get out of her system before finding a voice of her own. Resistance to this foreign matter abounds as well: it may be summarized in the difference between a novel that makes the reader contemplate (Ortega's preference) and one that contemplates aloud. Nor does this novel make the concessions to dramatic interest Ortega deems necessary «for the human soul»<sup>26</sup>. Rather, it either slows the plot or nearly eliminates it, in a further refusal of mastery over narrative much like that associated with women writers by French feminism<sup>27</sup>. The fluctuation between compliance with and resistance to the «Father's law» throughout

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<sup>26</sup> Acceptance of Ortega's literary theory is predicated upon a fixed human nature, or soul, one of the least antitraditional aspects of his aesthetics. The soul must be taken into account by writers; it becomes a restraint on the free play of the imagination. To copy Foucault's phrase, «the soul is the prison of the body (of the text)».

<sup>27</sup> The writings of Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva have obviously contributed to my understanding of this phenomenon; I am indebted to the outline presented by Elizabeth Grosz in *Sexual Subversions* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989) and to Paul Julian Smith's discussion of their relevance to Hispanism in *The Body Hispanic: Gender and Sexuality in Spanish and Spanish American Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

the work gives new meaning to the final words, «Something has ended, now I can say, 'Beginning!'» (200).

Ortega's «ideas sobre el cuerpo» are most notably expressed in the essay «Vitalidad, alma, espíritu» (1924)<sup>28</sup>. In it he seeks to differentiate his thoughts on psychology from those of Freud, which he believes are too mechanistic in their separation of the components of the psyche into ego, id, superego, subconscious, etc. Ortega does propose his own tripartite division, but calls them personality «centers» or «zones», emphasizing their inter-relatedness and overlap; these consist of the *espíritu* (most closely translatable as the rational mind; Ortega also calls in the «I», as the subject of statements of thought, opinion, and will), the *alma* (the site of emotions and vital energy; the «me» as object of external factors that provoke feelings over which one has no control), and the *intracuerpo*. The latter is «the portion of our psyche that lives infused in the body, bound to it and melded with it» (447). Herein lie consciousness of physical sensations, the basic instincts of self-preservation, «the attraction of one sex for another», «vitality», and perception of the inner body<sup>29</sup>. While Ortega asserts that the body has been much maligned by civilization — more so by Protestantism than by Catholicism — and that both body and intrabody should be studied for their role in determining human nature, by the end of his abruptly curtailed section on the physical he has managed to align neurotics, artists, mystics, philosophers, and women with an unusually acute, and therefore unhealthy, inner-body consciousness<sup>30</sup>. The impulse of the healthy organism is to look outward; only civilization has given a positive value, in the case of artists, mystics, and philosophers, to something «biologically pathological». Thanks to this phenomenon, woman «enjoys a greater sensitivity to physical pain than other creatures, whether human or animal» (450). On the other hand, woman «is better ac-

<sup>28</sup> Of course the use of bodily imagery in his work as a whole deserves a study of its own; it is one of the figures through which he helps make the essay a personal and literary genre. The article appears in the second volume of his *Obras completas* (Madrid: *Revista de Occidente*, 1946) 443-471.

<sup>29</sup> About this inner-body image, Ortega has interesting things to say: «When this matter is studied well, it would probably be discovered that the image each individual has of the interior of his/her own body is quite different. Herein lies one of the roots of our personalities» (449).

<sup>30</sup> Not only does this section end rather abruptly, but the vast majority of the essay is devoted to the totally abstract zones of spirit and soul.

quainted than the male with the marvelous respite, which consists of being overwhelmed by another being» (462). Ortega himself takes credit for doing some of the overwhelming when he proclaims himself a Don Juan who knows how to predict any woman's «quarter of an hour» of vulnerability to seduction <sup>31</sup>.

On a socio-historical as well as an individual level, Ortega's writing makes abundant use of sexual difference, and employs the binary opposition of masculine/feminine, along with youth/age and spirituality/corporality, as key «antagonistic powers» that determinate the character of an era. In a manner similar to Jung, he saw the masculine and feminine as traits possible in both males and females. It all depends upon which trait, or «life-style» is dominant at a particular time («Juventud» 464). For this reason, the Venus de Milo, sculpted during a masculine age par excellence, is a hermaphrodite in his eyes, «a kind of athlete with breasts» («¿Masculino o femenino?» 474). Conversely, from the twelfth century up to and including Ortega's grandparents' generation, the feminine mode has been in power, and «men's suits begin to imitate the lines of feminine dress» (476). Thus far his views correspond to Nietzsche's on the feminization of culture <sup>32</sup>. Ortega's time is distinguished as one of transition from feminine to masculine values, from mature to youthful ones, from the spiritual to the corporeal, and from an ideal of spiritualized love of woman to a «perception of male physical beauty» (477). For this reason women find themselves being assimilated to the male point of view in their interest in athletics and automobiles, and society has become ill-mannered after losing the feminine value placed on etiquette. Men have become more temperate in their relations with women, ceasing their Dantesque obsessions, but there is the danger of their resorting to «Doric love», Orteguian code for homosexuality. Women in turn dress and tone their bodies in order to look boyish, and hide their breasts, which were ostentatiously displayed during the nineteenth century. Ortega does his best not

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<sup>31</sup> His «confession» is not without irony, and he defers giving away the secrets of seduction so as not to incur the wrath of fellow Don Juans the world over, in «Vitalidad, alma, espíritu» (456). In *Memorias de Leticia Valle*, Chacel gives her young female character the chance to do the overwhelming instead, subverting the Don Juan myth.

<sup>32</sup> *The Joyful Wisdom* (1882), trans. Thomas Common (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1960).

to gloat over the triumph of masculinity: «As one who has spent his youth in a feminine epoch, it grieves me to see the humility with which the woman of today, dethroned, attempts to insinuate herself and to be tolerated in the society of men» (480).

There is ample cause here for Chacel to have changed genders out of humility and deference to the maestro's way of thinking. What is more, the attitude displayed toward the female body is certainly less «liberating» than that of Emilia Pardo Bazán's *Inso-lación* (1889), to cite an example from the last woman writer of major importance in the canon preceding Chacel. Ortega's attitude may in fact be a reaction to real advances made by women in Spanish society: hence his criticism is of the pedestal effect that resulted from the more constraining conditions of the nineteenth century. However, to forsake the pedestal and traditional femininity is to become male; for Ortega there is no definition of femininity other than his grandparents' patriarchal one. Thus, the female body is to be subjected still more, in Ortega's scheme, though not for the traditional reasons. Instead, the subjection is required for the emergence of a virile new society. This brings us to the matter of how the avant-garde, while ostensibly upholding radical change, brought no respite from patriarchalism. The representation of the female body in the novel is another case in point.

Víctor Fuentes describes the tendency of Spanish avant-garde writers, and particularly of Benjamín Jarnés, to «break the chain that unites fathers and sons across generations»: this includes a parody of bourgeois values that turns love into «a matrimonial transaction or reproductive sexuality»<sup>33</sup>. In Jarnés, this parody is achieved in part through a mechanization of sex and of the female body. A parallel is found in the Golden Age with Quevedo's satire, which unites the figure of woman with corruption and decay as it does other objects of men's desire, such as money<sup>34</sup>. Hence, what Fuentes and many other scholars of avant-garde movements have called a breaking of the intergenerational chain might more accurately be viewed as a repetition of an age-old Oedipal confrontation between father and son. As Susan Suleiman

<sup>33</sup> «La narrativa española de vanguardia (1923-1931): Un ensayo de interpretación», vol. 2 of *La novela lírica*, ed. Dario Villanueva (Madrid: Taurus, 1983) 158.

<sup>34</sup> Malcolm K. Read, *Vision in Exile: The Body in Spanish Literature and Linguistics. 1500-1800* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 199) 66.

observes of Georges Bataille, and of the avant-garde in general, that confrontation is «staged across and over the body of the mother», who has no active role in the proceedings. As long as this state of affairs persists, Suleiman holds that no true rupture with the past is possible (87).

In this climate, which appears to have released the old hostilities towards Woman and the body rather than abated them, it is no wonder that what Chacel has to say about the female body in *Estación. Ida y vuelta* is nowhere near as affirming or liberating as the desire-driven narrative by Pardo Bazán's mentioned above. Here there is no sliding into the semiotic mode, or *jouissance*<sup>35</sup>. Instead, true to the sliding of voices and narrative ambiguity, an ambivalence toward the female form is perceived that runs a spectrum from disgust or horror to fetishization to a subtle recurrence and pervasiveness. Suppressing it from the narrative, however, is clearly not an option. The avant-garde reaction against tradition means that the conventions of courtly love that glorified the idealized and inaccessible female lover, and that separated her body into praiseworthy parts, must be turned upside-down. Consequently, the blason is parodied in the only poem the narrator feels he can write about his beloved's eyes, and which duplicates diagrams found in medical textbooks:

Párpado ..... a  
 Pupila ..... b  
 Lagrimal ..... c  
 Pestañas ..... d (60)

Likewise, the narrator cannot understand his beloved's chagrin when he compares the tiny veins showing through the skin of her décolletage to a railroad map (105). He meant this as a compliment, to show how observant of her he is. Besides this parodying of conventions of courtly love, the narrator tends toward disgust, an attitude that would later find much development in

<sup>35</sup> This mode, conspicuously absent from Chacel's fiction, is however alluded to in her diary *Alcancia (Ida)* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1982), when she reflects that her friend Elisabeth has equated the joy of writing with sexual pleasure. Chacel favors a more complete form of sublimation through art: «De todos los elementos que componen el ser humano, el sexo es el que menos me interesa conservar» (25 July 1946: 20).



the movement of *tremendismo*: «The truth is that her mouth is not ugly. But the way her lips turn outward... it makes the gums so visible!» (112). He states that there is something about even the best-dressed women that inspires pity in him. He cannot watch his lover move her lips to pronounce «petit» without shuddering (113). When he kisses her goodbye, he feels, «more than repugnance... fed-up, as if I had kissed all the women in the world» (159). After the embrace the narrator leaves France and embarks on ruminations on his future novel that occupy most of the remaining text, thus turning away from the material world symbolized by the woman's body. Disdain for women in their attempt to conform to the patriarchal feminine ideal is also reflected: a girl wears her sorrow as if showing off a new dress, «like those girls who have been saving up for a whole year to one day show off a dress, stockings, and shoes of the same color; which is for them the height of elegance» (29).

Like male writers of the vanguard, Chacel must take aim at the common enemy — the female body as it is mystified, glorified, and fetishized by patriarchal society<sup>36</sup>. Yet her use of synecdoche and cliché in the parodying of these conventions has the paradoxical effect of creating a space for new significance for the body at the same time. When the narrator speaks, for example, of girls running with their breasts jumping up and down, «like fish freshly caught», there is more at work than in the typical *greguería* (165). These disturbingly active breasts defy the usual rendering of a passive female body for the male gaze, a conventional that male avant-garde writers were not concerned with subverting. The narrator's adoration of a tango dancer's calf muscle carries the fetishization of women's bodily parts to an extreme that becomes an eloquent critique:

Lo llenó todo aquella pantorrilla. Lo pervirtió todo, nos pervirtió a todos. Estaba tan bien educada, tan bien informada. Sabía tanto de tenis como de tango. Con tacón, sin tacón, con media de seda, con media de lana. Eclipsada la perso-

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<sup>36</sup> The wordplay of *Estación* also unravels clichés turning around the body that are not clearly gender-motivated. For example, the narrator says of «having one's arm twisted» that he prefers gentle orthopedics to dislocation (105), and contemplates the possibility of «losing one's arm», like a misplaced object (147). This literal transformation of figurative language that takes the physical for granted also has the function of restoring the original physical meaning to these clichés.

nalidad de su dueña. Es más: eclipsada la de su compañera. Era una pantorrilla sola la que estaba en todo. La que saludaba a la gente, la que ofrecía pastas. Esa muchacha tiene el pretexto de su pantorrilla. Ella no es gran cosa; pero su pantorrilla, no cabe duda, está bien (89-90).

Once again, the subversion of cliché introduces an active element that deforms reality and re-invests the female form with «virile» power. Besides this tendency in the novel, the female body also achieves new significance in the nearly subtextual recurrence of which it is the subject. The narrator describes the parts of his house in personifying metaphors for the first several pages, constructing a powerful image. Its patio is «so naked and so imprisoning», its windows «sleep with their mouths open», its façade conceals «an extraordinary interiority», and its stairway «does not welcome the visitor» (15-18). Not surprisingly, it has a seductive influence on those who inhabit it:

Porque la casa nos ha hecho apasionadamente caseros. Nos tiene seducidos, como esas mujeres que, sin aparentar gran atractivo, al que se casa con ellas lo encasan llenándole la vida de pequeños encantos caseros (17).

The trope of the house/woman underlies and encompasses the beginning of the love affair between the narrator and his neighbor. It forms a third party to their affair in the form of the personified stairway, whose sense of foreboding they conquer in time: «Did it [the stairwell] know it would be overcome, we wondered?» (24) and who eventually collaborates with them in concealing their romance. «It was caught making a falsely calm gesture as if to say, 'Nothing has happened here'» (26)<sup>37</sup>. The reverse trope of the woman/house is represented by the *novia* when he sees in her eyes «the dark hole of open windows». The quality of interiority, ubiquitous in this novel, is further associated with the female body in the aforementioned image of sisters who could fit inside each other «like Chinese boxes» (56).

<sup>37</sup> The house-made-woman lends itself also to expression in the visual arts, such as Salvador Dalí, *La cabeza de Mae West, usable como un apartamento surrealista*. Art Institute of Chicago.

In sum, and in larger terms, one could also say that the stations and seasons of this novel are precisely those of the female body. Most apparently, the narrator's movements through novelistic space are determined by the structure of the house/woman, and later by developments within the lover's body (the telegram relating her pregnancy brings about his return from France). The narrator's voice is never unflinchingly «male» in that it is never wholly separated from the female consciousness. the gestation of the narrator's esthetic ideas on the textual surface run parallel to the unstated but implied development of his child in its mother's body. The narrator's presumably male body, in contrast, is scarcely referred to, neglecting Ortega's call for a glorification of the male body. He is called «a Gothic boy», hence leaning more toward the spiritual than the physical (118).

In addition to the explosion of cliché and the parodying of traditional feminine idealization shared by other Spanish *vanguardistas*, Chacel has incorporated feminine forms that shape the narrative and underlie it. A masculinization of the narrative voice may hold sway on its surface, in accordance with the predominantly male ethic and paradoxical «tradition» of vanguardism, but this is a cloak that is assumed and discarded. At the same time, the feminization of space is most pervasive. As readings of articles relating to the body written by the main spokesman for this new tradition, Ortega, have demonstrated, suppression of the female body was called for in order to facilitate a new and virile culture. Chacel's first novel pays lip service to this call, but the recurrence of the female body, and investing of feminine bodily parts with uncanny powers, proves irrepressible, making of *Estación. Ida y vuelta* something more complicated than a novel of apprenticeship for its author; the text preserves a spirit of rebellion which ultimately liberates the work from forgotten shelves of long-ago novelistic «experiments». Chacel's subsequent work would turn in quite a different direction, leaving her first novel as evidence of a short and self-contained career in miniature, and not merely a step on the way to narrative mastery.

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